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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 004644

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: REFORM JOURNAL RESISTS PRESSURE TO FIRE CHIEF; HU
JINTAO AND JIANG ZEMIN REPORTEDLY INVOLVED

REF: 07 BEIJING 3608

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson.
Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) Party propaganda authorities have asked the president of a controversial pro-reform journal to step down, according to Embassy contacts and Western media, allegedly over recent articles about Zhao Ziyang, the late former Party chief who was ousted in the crackdown on the 1989 Tiananmen protests. Former Party chief Jiang Zemin, who replaced Zhao Ziyang, is reportedly applying political pressure to fire the journal's president out of fear that Jiang's political legacy is implicitly diminished, or even negated, by the journal's positive portrayals of Zhao, some contacts maintain. Despite the flap, the journal's managers not only have decided to ignore the pressure, but have published yet another positive piece on Zhao Ziyang in their December issue. End Summary.

JOURNAL RESISTS POLITICAL PRESSURE

2. (C) Chinese Communist Party propaganda authorities have allegedly pressured Du Daozheng, President (shezhang) of the controversial pro-reform history journal Yanhuang Chunqiu (informal translation: Annals of the Chinese Nation), to step down over public discussion of former Party chief Zhao Ziyang, normally a taboo subject, according to Embassy contacts and Western media. The journal, run by former high-ranking Party reformers and popular among reform intellectuals, has run a series of articles over the past year portraying Zhao, who was ousted in the lead-up to the military crackdown on Tiananmen Square protestors in 1989, in a positive light. Du, the former head of the Government's media watchdog, the State Administration of Press and Publications (guojia xinwen chubansongju), is the founder and guiding hand of the journal and until now has appeared to be beyond political attack because of his stature in the Party.

3. (C) In a November 21 e-mail to PolOff, Li Nanyang (protect), daughter of pro-reform, veteran Party official Li Rui, an advisor to the journal, confirmed news stories about the pressure on Du to step down but said Du and editor-in-chief Wu Si are "standing fast." Li Nanyang said Wu told her by e-mail that the pressure to resign is "very mild" and that, following consultation with her father Li Rui, Du and Wu decided to "just ignore it." Wu's e-mail, which Li Nanyang sent to PolOff, stated that, "Elder Du and your father talked it over, and Du absolutely will not step down. This is not a question of an individual's resignation.... We estimate the issue will not be blown out of proportion (nao da). For now, everything is normal, and

we are optimistic about the future."

JIANG ZEMIN VENDETTA?

14. (C) Former Party chief Jiang Zemin is behind the attempt to remove Du, according to two Embassy contacts. In addition to violating Party strictures on discussions of the disgraced Zhao, contacts say, the articles implicitly cast aspersions on Jiang's tenure as Party General Secretary. Zhou Xiaozheng (protect), a Renmin University sociology professor and frequent Phoenix TV commentator, told PolOff December 13 that there is a "leadership rivalry" angle to the Yanhuang Chunqiu story. Jiang Zemin reportedly ordered Politburo Standing Committee Member and media czar Li Changchun to pull a recent Yanhuang Chunqiu article on Zhao and to "punish" Du Daozheng. From Li's actions, it appeared he did not know quite how to handle the situation, Zhou said, as Li "pushed the issue down the chain for action." Those below him reportedly did the same, with everyone trying to "sidestep" the issue.

HU JINTAO REPORTEDLY ENTERS THE FRAY

15. (C) Eventually, Party General Secretary Hu Jintao intervened, Renmin University's Zhou Xiaozheng claimed, issuing instructions that "those within the Party" should be dealt with more leniently than those "outside." This means that "nothing" will happen to Yanhuang Chunqiu and Du Daozheng, Zhou stated. This outcome is "highly ironic," Zhou commented, given that Jiang Zemin is generally "much more liberal and tolerant" than Hu Jintao on media issues. In

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this case, however, Hu's and Jiang's positions are reversed. After all, for Jiang Zemin, issues concerning Zhao Ziyang are "exceptionally sensitive" and touch on Jiang's "very status," Zhou averred. (COMMENT: Zhou made the above comments December 13 to PolOff and dissident scholar Liu Junning, head of the independent think tank the Cathay Institute. When questioned skeptically by Liu over the source of his information, Zhou said Yanhuang Chunqiu's editor Wu Si gave him the "inside scoop.")

16. (C) Yang Ziyun (protect), senior editor at the National Development and Reform Commission's official journal China Reform, separately confirmed to PolOff December 19 that rumors of Jiang Zemin's alleged order to Li Changchun to punish Du Daozheng and his journal are circulating among media and academic circles, while admitting that she "has no proof." Yang said that even though the journal is run by the Party's liberal faction, the fact that they are Party insiders gives them "political protection." Many observers consider the journal a "haven" for the remnants of Zhao Ziyang's close followers. One aspect of the current debate over the legacy of reform is whether Zhao's economic policies were effective, or whether conservative leader and Deng Xiaoping rival Chen Yun "saved the day" when Zhao's power was greatly curtailed following the economic overheating of 1988, Yang said.

UNDETERRED: NEW ARTICLE ABOUT ZHAO IN DECEMBER ISSUE

17. (C) Not only have Yanhuang Chunqiu's managers apparently survived so far the high-level attempt to shut their journal down, but they have published yet another positive piece on Zhao Ziyang in their December issue that seems to implicitly criticize the current Party leadership. This most recent issue contains an article by former Politburo Standing Committee Member Hu Qili, who was purged along with Zhao Ziyang for reportedly siding with him during the internal leadership debate over Zhao's fate. While the article's main focus is Hu Qili's personal account of the origin of Deng Xiaoping's early-1980s educational reforms (in which Hu Qili played a pivotal role), it is full of praise for the

leadership role of Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang, premier and Party chief at the time, respectively, in carrying out Deng's grand vision for reform. Moreover, in language that invites comparison with present-day political and social realities, the article praises the "democratic and open" decision-making style of the then-central leadership, including a willingness to "listen to all views, including opposing views," and to solicit opinions broadly among all sectors of society and base important decisions on those opinions. Hu Qili asserts that this "democratic" style was sustained by the stellar personal qualities of the top leaders but "has not yet been institutionalized" and "is worthy of study." Finally, the piece characterizes the 1980s as a time of "great creativity, enthusiasm and singleness of mind and purpose" of the Chinese people.

YANHUANG CHUNQIU STICKS TO REFORM AGENDA

18. (C) The controversial journal, whose managers and many authors are prominent retired officials from the Party's reform wing, has long been a target of hard-line Party ideologues. In addition to the recent Zhao Ziyang pieces, the journal has run a number of sensitive articles over the past two years, implicitly challenging official interpretations of significant events and figures in Party history or pushing the boundaries of permissible content. One notable article in February 2007 called for abandoning the Leninist version of Marxism and adopting European-style democratic socialism (reftel). A Western journalist quoted Du on December 2 as stating that, "Whenever the Central Propaganda Department persecutes you, circulation goes up. We've been persecuted eight times; this is the ninth." The article stated that Du remains confident that he and his magazine will survive with the help of senior cadres, just as they have survived previous periods of criticism.

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